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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/627,006	07/25/2003	W. Brett Wilson	2000.005	3714
7590 Douglas J. Collins ExxonMobil Upstream Research Company P.O. Box 2189 Houston, TX 77252-2189			EXAMINER BEACH, THOMAS A	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3671	

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS	01/11/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/627,006

Applicant(s)

WILSON, W. BRETT

Examiner

Thomas A. Beach

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on Appeal Brief filed 10/19/06.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) _____ is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 14-19 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 and 11-13 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 10 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

1. In view of the Appeal Brief filed on 10/19/06, PROSECUTION IS HEREBY REOPENED. New grounds of rejection are set forth below.

To avoid abandonment of the application, appellant must exercise one of the following two options:

(1) file a reply under 37 CFR 1.111 (if this Office action is non-final) or a reply under 37 CFR 1.113 (if this Office action is final); or,

(2) initiate a new appeal by filing a notice of appeal under 37 CFR 41.31 followed by an appeal brief under 37 CFR 41.37. The previously paid notice of appeal fee and appeal brief fee can be applied to the new appeal. If, however, the appeal fees set forth in 37 CFR 41.20 have been increased since they were previously paid, then appellant must pay the difference between the increased fees and the amount previously paid.

A Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE) has approved of reopening prosecution by signing below:

Thomas B. Will.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. Claims 1-3, 5-9, and 11-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Legras et al 7,100,694 in view of Dupont et al 6,472,614. Legras shows a fluid transfer system for use in offshore hydrocarbon producing operations (fig.

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2), having a hybrid riser tower (fig 1) extending upwardly from the sea floor to a location substantially below the wave zone of the body of water; a variable buoyancy device 207, to which the upper end of the riser tower is attached, capable of maintaining the riser tower in a substantially vertical orientation (fig 2); one or more catenary risers/umbilical (fig.2; unnumbered umbilicals 205) extending upwardly from the sea floor and attached at their upper ends to said variable buoyancy device; and one or more flexible pipe jumpers 210 extending from said variable buoyancy device to a surface production facility so as to allow fluid communication between said steel catenary riser terminating at said variable buoyancy device and the surface production facility (fig 2). Legras does show the umbilical to be catenary, but does not disclose the umbilicals to be steel catenary risers; however, Dupont shows a similar fluid transfer system for use in offshore hydrocarbon producing operations having umbilicals that are made with steel (abstract & col. 1, lines 7-10). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the catenary umbilicals Legras, as taught by Dupont, to be made with steel since it is well known in the umbilicals.

As concerns claim 2, the combination shows the surface production facility comprises a floating production facility (Legras 208).

As concerns claim 3, the combination shows mid-depth transfer lines extending from said variable buoyancy device to another surface production facility (Legras, fig. 2).

As concerns claim 9, the combination shows the variable buoyancy device has means for varying the buoyancy of said variable buoyancy device (Legras 207).

As concerns claim 11, the combination shows steel catenary risers extend from said variable buoyancy device to remote production and processing facilities (Legras fig 2).

As concerns claim 12, the combination shows the hydrocarbon fluids from one or more subsea wells (Legras fig 1) are transported from the sea floor to said floating production vessel through at least one hybrid riser tower and at least one flexible pipe jumper.

As concerns claim 13, the combination shows the hydrocarbon fluids are exported from said surface production facility through at least one flexible pipe jumper and at least one steel catenary riser (Legras, figs 1-2).

3. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Legras 7,100,694 and Dupont et al 6,472,614 in view of de Baan et al 5,275,510. The combination does not show a mid-depth transfer lines extending from said variable buoyancy device to an offloading buoy; however, de Baan shows a similar fluid transfer system for use in offshore hydrocarbon producing operations having show a mid-depth transfer lines 28, 30 extending from said variable buoyancy device 42 to an offloading buoy. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the combination, as taught by de Baan, to include to an offloading buoy since Legras discloses the use of and shows that the use of an offloading is well know in the art and thus provides means for ships to load production fluid in multiple locations without the expense of maintaining a facility at each location.

Allowable Subject Matter

4. Claim 10 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.
5. Claims 14-19 are allowed.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments with respect to the claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

7. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Thomas A. Beach whose telephone number is 571.272.6988. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Thomas Will can be reached on 571.272.6998. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571.273.8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Thomas A. Beach

January 7, 2007

THOMAS A. BEACH
Primary Examiner
Group 3600